

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PARM PFOR MASS G NO
SUBJ: DEPARTMENT STUDY OF CONVENTIONAL ARMS SUPPLY RESTRAINTS

REF: STATE 4313

1. SWISS GOVERNMENT WOULD APPROACH ISSUE OF CONVENTIONAL ARMS LIMITATIONS WITH CONSIDERABLE CAUTION, BUT IN A POSITIVE FRAME OF REFERENCE. FOUR YEARS AGO THIS ISSUE WAS EXTENSIVELY AND HEATEDLY DEBATED IN PARLIAMENT AND PRESS AND IT RECURS FROM TIME TO TIME, MOST RECENTLY IN CONNECTION WITH PROPOSED STOP OF ARMS EXPORTS TO SPAIN AFTER EXECUTION OF TERRORISTS.

2. SWISS ENACTED NEW LAW IN 1972 WHICH STOPPED SHORT OF COMPLETE EXPORT BAN, AS PROPOSED BY LEFTWING ELEMENTS; HOWEVER, IT SOUGHT TO CIRCUMSCRIBE ARMS EXPORTS SHARPLY. LAW PROHIBITS ARMS EXPORTS: 1) TO AREAS WHERE ARMED CONFLICT IS TAKING PLACE, CONFLICT IS THREATENING OR DANGEROUS TENSIONS EXIST; 2) IF THERE ARE GROUNDS FOR BELIEVING THAT SUCH EXPORTS WOULD CONFLICT WITH OTHER ELEMENTS OF SWISS FOREIGN POLICY WITH RESPECT TO DEVELOPMENT AID OR THE FURTHERANCE OF HUMAN RIGHTS. WE CANNOT BE SURE HOW SWISS HAVE CARRIED OUT LAW, BUT NOTE THAT SWISS ARMS EXPORTS HAVE BEEN RESTRICTED GENERALLY TO POLITICALLY STABLE AREAS, WITH THE POSSIBLE EXCEPTION OF SPAIN.

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3. SWISS ARMS EXPORTS HAVE BEEN RISING STEADILY FROM

ABOUT SF 112 MILLION IN 1968 TO SF 203 MILLION (\$78.1 MILLION, IN 1974 AND THEY ARE SUBSTANTIALLY UP AGAIN IN 1975. ARMS EXPORTS HAVE AMOUNTED TO 0.6-0.7 PERCENT OF OVERALL SWISS EXPORTS FOR PAST SEVEN YEARS. IN FIRST TEN MONTHS OF 1975, SOME 85 PERCENT OF SWISS ARMS SALES, WHICH COVER A BROAD RANGE OF OFFENSIVE AND DEFENSIVE WEAPONS, HAVE GONE TO ONLY THREE COUNTRIES: IRAN, FRG, SPAIN.

4. DEFENSE MINISTER TOLD PARLIAMENT FOUR YEARS AGO THAT INDUSTRY CANNOT AFFORD TO RENOUNCE ALL EXPORTS. WHILE WE DO NOT HAVE BASIS FOR JUDGING INDUSTRY'S DEPENDENCE ON EXPORTS, WE DOUBT IT IS SUBSTANTIAL AT THIS TIME, EXCEPT POSSIBLY IN SOME NARROW SECTORS OF THE INDUSTRY. OVERALL ARMS EXPORTS FIGURES DO NOT STRIKE US AS PARTICULARLY LARGE MEASURED AGAINST OVERALL SWISS ECONOMY AND MILITARY BUDGET.

5. GOVERNMENT WOULD ALSO HAVE TO PAY HEED TO MEDIA AND PUBLIC OPINION, BOTH OF WHICH CAN BE EXPECTED TO PROVIDE STRONG SUPPORT FOR ARMS TRANSFER IMITATION INITIATIVE.

6. APPROACH TO TRANSFER RESTRAINTS SHOULD OBVIOUSLY NOT INVOLVE ANY MEASURE THAT COULD EVEN REMOTELY BE CONSIDERED AS IMPINGING ON TRADITIONAL SWISS NEUTRALITY. HOWEVER, WHILE SWISS LIKE TO BE EVEN-HANDED, THEY HAVE ALREADY ACCEPTED FOR THEMSELVES RESTRICTIONS THAT WOULD LEAD TO VARYING EXPORT CONTROLS TO DIFFERENT COUNTRIES (PARA 2 ABOVE). RESTRAINTS EMPLOYING SWISS CRITERIA CITED ABOVE WOULD PROBABLY FIND GREATER RECEPTIVITY THAN OTHERS.

7. SWISS IDEALISM AND HUMANISM ARE STRONGLY LEAVENED BY PRAGMATISM. THEY WOULD PROBABLY WELCOME AN INITIATIVE IF IT PROMISED AT LEAST SOME HOPE OF UNIVERSAL, OR AT LEAST VERY WIDE, ACCEPTANCE. A SUPPLIERS-RECIPIENTS CONFERENCE MIGHT APPEAR INEVITABLE AND DESIRABLE IN THEIR EYES, BUT THEY MIGHT NOT WISH TO EXCLUDE THE POSSIBILITY FIRST OF A SUPPLIERS CONFERENCE TO GET DUCKS IN A ROW.

8. IN SUM, WE BELIEVE THE GOS WOULD ON BALANCE FAVOR A SERIOUS INITIATIVE, ONE THAT WAS NOT MERELY A PROPAGANDA EXERCISE. WE DO NOT BELIEVE THE SWISS WOULD SEE IT AS
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ADVERSELY AFFECTING SIGNIFICANT SWISS INTERESTS. WE WOULD EXPECT SOME OPPOSITION FROM THE SWISS ARMS INDUSTRY, BUT NOT ENOUGH TO AFFECT A GENERALLY RECEPTIVE GOS ATTITUDE.
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